

Correspondence.

MISTAKES IN ESTIMATES—HERNE-HILL CHURCH.

Sir,—As one of your numerous readers, allow me to express my satisfaction as regards the talented manner in which your various correspondents are treating the question of architectural competition, with the view of purifying future decisions, so that real merit may ultimately find its proper level. However desirable this object may be to accomplish, it should be borne in mind there are serious mismanagements in building competitions, which appear to me to have equal claim on the pages of *THE BUILDER*, and, in support of my assertion, I refer you to that unfortunate affair at Herne-hill Church.

We take for granted the matter went through a business form, and the quantities were supposed to be taken out by competent persons; of course the builders, satisfied of the abilities of the parties so employed, proceed to prize the various items in full confidence that all are correct. Imagine the contractor's surprise when he finds out that the actual quantity of stone required for the completion of his works exceeds the quantities furnished, by some 2,000 cubic feet or upwards. Then comes the question, what is to be done? Not allowed to throw up his contract, he is told he can fall back on the parties who supplied the quantities to make up his loss. We then have the name of Mr. Broomfield introduced to us as the person who made so serious an error. Mr. Broomfield then tells us he did not take out the quantities at all, as the time allowed was too short, but that he copied them by permission of the architect from his private quantities. The architect next introduces himself, and very politely gives Mr. Broomfield the lie direct. The principal clerk next approaches the arena of discord, and after quoting a precedent in point of allowing an inspection of private quantities on the Great Western Railway, admits that on the second application of Mr. Broomfield he was allowed to copy the private quantities of the architect, but at the same time was cautioned they could not be depended on as correct.

Thus it appears, if this statement be true, Mr. Broomfield supplied copies he was informed could not be depended on, and the architect allowed builders to tender for building this church, from quantities he knew were copies of his own, which he could not say were correct.

Yet after all these statements, we are still in the same position as regards being informed where the blame lies: neither seems inclined to own the fault, but makes vain attempts to throw it back from one to the other.

I trust, Sir, you will consider this Herne-hill Church affair to be of a serious character, as affecting builders generally, and that it demands a further notice in the columns of your journal, as the architect and builders' organ, for it is self-evident, if the truth is before us, that Mr. Sugden has encountered a heavy loss by such a system of conducting competition, and it may prevent respectable builders in future from engaging in competition from quantities furnished in such a loose, and, to say the least, disgraceful manner.

I am, Sir, &c.,
Lambeth, March 25th. W. A.

[We have carefully considered a number of letters forwarded to us on this subject, including one from Mr. Broomfield, and one (accidentally) unsigned, purporting to be from Mr. Sugden. None of them, however, seem to disprove the statement made by Mr. Alexander's clerk (p. 130, ante), that when he allowed Mr. Broomfield to inspect the abstracts and dimension books, Mr. B. was distinctly told that Mr. Alexander would not be responsible for their correctness; further, that a duplicate specification was lodged with the Church Commissioners, and would serve to prove that no alteration was made in it after the estimates were prepared. The architect's estimate was probably what architects' estimates often are (and are required only to be), namely, a general one to get at the probable cost: and the mistake seems to have been, adopting the quantities, taken out perhaps roughly for that purpose, without comparing them with his specifications and drawings. We trust what has been said on this occurrence may have

the effect of inducing greater caution in future on the part of those deputed to take out the quantities for builders, and may prevent architects from allowing their quantities to be seen, unless they are quite satisfied that they are correct.—Ed.]

HOLLOWAY CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL.

Sir,—Your correspondent of last week who desires some information respecting the late competition for a new Independent Chapel at Holloway, appears (like many others) to be surprised at the mystery with which the whole affair was conducted. Secrecy in such matters never looks well, and generally defeats its own intentions, since it arouses suspicion, and, as in the present instance, prompts inquiries.

From hints unwittingly dropped in different quarters (and those versed in architectural competitions know too well how to put such together), I was led to conclude that the studied reserve, which your correspondent has also noticed, was not casual, but a matter of prudence, inasmuch as the Holloway Independent Chapel Committee had not shown themselves proof against the influence of party interest.

But now for more tangible evidence:—when I had received back my drawings, I naturally wished to know who was the fortunate candidate, and was informed Messrs. Emmett and Chadwick, and, on further inquiry, learnt that Mr. E. was "one of the congregation." This looked very doubtful. It has since got whispered about that the above parties have not adhered to the conditions of the furnished instructions, and that the committee have winked at the discrepancies.

That a portion of the required accommodation is provided in a gallery notwithstanding the express direction "*No galleries to be erected at present*," a gross unfairness towards the other competitors, who, I doubt not, to a man, obeyed its obvious meaning.

That before any of the unsuccessful drawings were returned, it was decided entirely to alter the character of the approved elevation and—That before the business was finally achieved, to make assurance certain, the plan was revised, and no time lost in setting it out on the ground.

Now, Sir, there is an old saying, that truth will out, and if corroborated rumours become facts, these charges must be true; at any rate, I see no reason for disbelieving them till they are *generally and officially* contradicted. I am not going to quarrel with the committee for wishing "one of the congregation," in the first instance a committee-man himself, to build their chapel if they can trust to his taste and abilities, but I do complain, that in consequence of a public advertisement so many architects have been induced to expend time and labour in preparing designs, with the hope that their respective merits would be honestly weighed, when the result (if what is above stated be correct) seems to force upon us the not very palatable notion, that the *real design* after all was to collect a few suggestions gratis, and then make such use of them as might be convenient in the improvement of a "cut and dried" plan.

I am, Sir, &c.,
FAIRPLAY.

P.S.—I quite fall in with the idea of exhibiting the different designs, and am ready to contribute mine.

THE FOUNTAINS IN TRAFALGAR-SQUARE.

—Several experimental trials have lately been made to test these works, which at last have been pronounced to be complete, and ready for constant use. The fountains will be put in daily operation as soon as the basins are repaired, they having got out of order, and the cement being cracked in many places from imperfect workmanship. The fountains are to play for ten hours each day, such being the contract with the engineers of the works. The cistern from which they are supplied at the top of the engine-house in Orange-street holds 37,000 gallons of water, and the higher main at the top of the tower for the supply of the Government-offices about 20,000 gallons. The water will ascend to a height of 40 feet; but at the recent trials the jets were only suffered to play to a height of from 6 to 8 feet, as with a greater ascent the water is liable to be driven by the wind to a considerable distance across the square.

Miscellanea.

GLASS FOR OPTICAL PURPOSES.—At a recent meeting of the Society of Arts, Mr. Claudet submitted a communication on the improvements recently introduced into the manufacture of glass for optical purposes. The importance of this invention will be clearly understood if we reflect that upon the perfection of glass depends entirely the power and utility of the telescope, and hitherto the manufacture of a material possessing the requisite properties in a sufficiently high degree has been a matter of infinite difficulty and uncertainty. The defects most injurious to glass employed in the construction of philosophical instruments were, the numerous filaments and lines, called by opticians "striae," and also the spots produced by the bubbles of confined air. These defects arose from the almost impossibility of obtaining an intimate mixture during the fusion of the different materials composing the glass. A means has, however, been discovered by M. Bontemps, a French gentleman, founded upon an old process invented by a Swiss, of the name of Guinand, and it is this invention that formed the subject of Mr. Claudet's communication. By an ingenious contrivance a complete mixture of the materials, when molten, is obtained, so as to produce perfect homogeneity and the entire destruction of all the defects in the glass. Lenses, with scarcely any blemishes, may be made of two or even three feet in diameter; and it was stated in Mr. Claudet's paper that the inventor has undertaken to furnish to the Royal Observatory at Paris the lenses for an achromatic object glass of a metre (about 40 inches) in diameter.

DECORATIVE ART SOCIETY.—On Wednesday, 26th ult., a paper "On the physiology of timber trees, considered with reference to manufacturing purposes" (second notice) was read by Mr. Vicary. He passed in review various theories concerning the growth and formation of pith, annular rings, medullary rays, bark, &c., the influence of soil, light, winds, and pruning; and also the evidences of health and maturity in the living tree. The tubular construction of timber, its medullary rays, &c., were illustrated by the oxy-hydrogen microscope, with transverse, oblique, and longitudinal sections of various woods prepared for this occasion. Sir W. Symonds, in the course of his observations, expressed his willingness to afford to inquirers the facility and advantage of examining the Government collection of woods, &c., at present under his control. Papers "On stained glass," and "On the application of colours to manufactures," were announced to be read at the next meeting of the society.

INSTITUTE OF THE FINE ARTS.—The monthly meeting of this body was held on Saturday evening last in the great room of the Society of Arts, Adelphi. The chair was taken by Mr. Wyse, M.P. A great number of members and their friends was present, the room being literally filled. The chairman addressed the meeting in a very eloquent speech, in which he took a view of the rise and progress of art, and its present state and prospects. He insisted on the necessity which called upon the artists of this country to become the teachers of the principles of art to the people generally, and to cultivate and direct properly the taste of their fellow-countrymen. Mr. James Fogg then read a paper, in which he set forth the advantages which would accrue to the fine arts if a national exhibition of engravings were established, and proposed that the government should be called upon to establish a gallery for that purpose. Mr. Park read a paper on modern sculpture, in which he made some severe strictures on the statue of the Duke of Wellington lately erected at Glasgow: after which a vote of thanks was passed to the chairman, and the meeting broke up.

BISTOL ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS.—The first annual exhibition of works of living artists will be opened on or about the 14th instant. In aid of the fund now collecting for the establishment of the academy, a bazaar has been proposed, to which many who are unable to give money may be disposed to send prints, drawings, duplicate copies of books, &c. It is thought that a large sum might thus be raised.